

News Release

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Canada's New Government Takes an Important Step to Improve Women's Health

The Honourable Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance, today highlighted the commitment by Canada's New Government to help establish a national vaccine program that will protect women and girls from cancer of the cervix. At this event, Minister Flaherty was joined by clinical staff and a cancer patient at the Shirley E. Greenberg Women's Health Centre in Ottawa.

Budget 2007 provides \$300 million in per capita funding for provinces and territories to fight human papillomavirus (HPV), which is the major cause of cancer of the cervix. This is the second most common cancer in women aged 20 to 44, after breast cancer.

"Canadians are proud of their health care system, and we must constantly work to keep it strong with investments like the one we are announcing today," said Minister Flaherty. "Let the day come when people look back on this cancer as a disease we have conquered, in the same way we do polio today."

In July 2006, the Government approved a vaccine for use by young girls and women that prevents the majority of these cancers, providing protection against the two types of HPV that are responsible for approximately 70 per cent of cancers of the cervix in Canada.

"When effective new vaccines become available, it is in the best interest of all Canadians to receive them as quickly as possible," added Minister Flaherty. "Immunization is a cost-effective method of disease prevention that allows us to use precious health care dollars more efficiently. I encourage the provinces and territories to avail themselves of this funding for the benefit of women and girls throughout Canada."

"Years ago, the concept of a vaccination to prevent cancer seemed so distant and optimistic. Today, Canada's New Government is helping to make this a reality for Canadian women," said the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health. "Our new government's support for controlling and curing cancer is very real. Last year, Prime Minister Harper announced \$260 million for a new organization to implement a cancer



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strategy, and now for the first time we're supporting a vaccine initiative that can prevent cancer of the cervix."

A wide range of medical experts and associations have publicly expressed their support for this program.

"For the first time ever we have a vaccine that will prevent cervical cancer. This allows us to anticipate a time when no woman need suffer from the devastating effects of this disease," said Dr. Vyta Senikas, Associate Executive Vice-President of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. "As a society, we cannot underestimate the impact that this vaccine will have, and we commend the federal government for making this significant financial commitment to ensure that Canadian girls and women have access to it."

The Federation of Medical Women of Canada has also commended this initiative. "With this new budget, the federal government is showing true leadership with respect to women's health," said Dr. Gail Beck, President of the Federation.

In November 2006, Canada's New Government established the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer to implement a five-year cancer control plan. The plan includes reducing the number of new cases of cancer among Canadians, enhancing the quality of life of those living with cancer, and lessening the likelihood of Canadians dying from cancer.

Budget 2007 also included funding of up to \$612 million to support all provinces and territories as they move forward with their commitments to implement patient wait times guarantees.

In addition, the budget proposes an investment of \$400 million for Canada Health Infoway, an organization that is making significant progress in working with provinces and territories to implement electronic health records, which will help to reduce wait times, reduce the risk of medical errors and lead to better health outcomes.

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